

Abstract of the Disclosure

The invention is to provide an outer surface-inspecting method, a master pattern and an outer surface-inspecting apparatus, which can eliminate severe positional alignment of the master pattern, avoid erroneous judgment taking acceptable products as unacceptable ones and suppress increase in number of standard pattern portions to be prepared as a master pattern. In the method and the apparatus, an outer surface of inspection areas 16a to 16i having repeated patterns are inspected through comparison with the predetermined master pattern. The inspection area is divided into a plurality of matrix-like view areas 16a to 16i. Mutually different standard pattern portions 17a to 17i are used depending upon different edge shapes of the divided inspection areas 16a to 16i contained in the inspection area, respectively. The present invention is suitable for inspecting the outer surface of a semiconductor chip such as a memory or a CCD (charge-coupled device).